

PART VI

Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Dairying and general livestock farming are by far the major agricultural activities in Wahkiakum County. In the 1954 Census, over two-thirds of all the 367 farms in the area were classed as dairy or livestock farms. About 90 percent of all sales from farms were derived from livestock including poultry. Out of a total sale value of \$1,470,000, the sum of \$1,055,000 was for whole milk and cream, and another \$225,500 was for animals sold alive. With 200 of its farms classed as dairy farms, Wahkiakum County is one of the most specialized dairy areas of western Washington. While one of the smallest counties of Washington, Wahkiakum ranks fifteenth in the state in value of dairy farm products sold.

Livestock Trends

Major changes in livestock farming have occurred since 1920. The total cattle population rose from about 4,500 head in 1920 to 10,000 head in 1956. Dairy cattle have not increased greatly but large gains were made in the beef

Total Value of Wahkiakum County Livestock: \$969,116

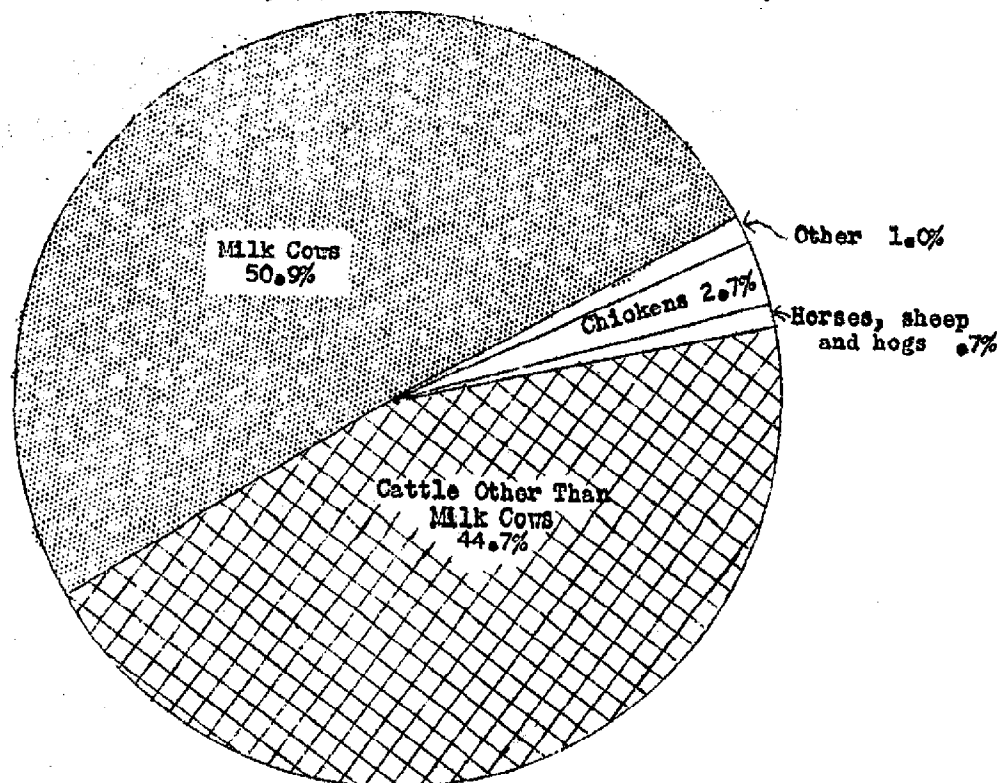


Figure 12.-- Value of Livestock on Farms
Wahkiakum County, 1950
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

breeds. Beef animals have gone up from less than 500 head to 2,800 in the last 15 years. A dairy cattle peak of 8,500 head was reached in 1944 when milk was in great demand during World War II. The increase of beef animals has come about mainly since 1950.

Sharp declines in hogs and horses and some gain in sheep has happened since 1920. Poultry farming has generally been reduced. Chickens and egg production are down considerably below 1939 levels. Turkey production has gained in recent years.

Cattle: Dairy and Beef Farming

Dairying and raising beef cattle characterizes the county's farming economy. Dairy cattle, producing whole milk and processing milk for markets in the Portland metropolitan district is the keystone of farm life in this lower Columbia River area. About 200 farms were selling whole milk in 1954. The number of dairy farms, however, decreased by 70 from 1950 to 1954 indicating that some small-scale producers have abandoned dairying. Grade A milk production has also required larger investments in farm equipment to satisfy sanitation regulations and has been a deterrent to expansion.

Dairy production has expanded into grade A whole milk for the urban markets, while farm production of cream and butter and milk for local marketing has dwindled. Volume of production and volume of sales are now slightly below the peak war-time years.

Table 15.- Dairy Products Sold From Farms
Wahkiakum County, 1939-1954.

| Year | Whole Milk Sold From Farms | | Cream Sold From Farms | | Butter Sold From Farms | |
|------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| | (pounds) | (dollars) | (pounds) | (dollars) | (pounds) | (dollars) |
| 1939 | 18,760,000 | \$ 565,000 | 137,000 | \$73,000 | 56 | 23 |
| 1944 | 29,007,300 | 1,160,000 | 3,400 | 1,600 | --- | --- |
| 1949 | 22,349,590 | 917,400 | 20,982 | 13,400 | --- | --- |
| 1954 | 24,916,679 | 1,038,650 | 30,185 | 16,650 | --- | --- |

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

A change to beef cattle has followed some decline in dairying operations in recent years. New farmers have found beef farming less demanding for labor and less costly for barns, sheds and milk handling equipment now required for grade A milk production. Beef farming also fits in better with the part-time farming system that is common on the outskirts of industrial localities along the lower Columbia River. Hardy breeds of beef cattle such as Herefords and Angus are also able to forage well in the flood-plain bottomlands and hilly, brushy and cut-over areas common in the area. The labor-saving factor probably is a major reason for the expanded beef-raising operations since 1950.

Table 16.- Livestock Numbers on Farms
Wahkiakum County, 1939-1956.

| Year | January 1 Numbers on Farms | | |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| | All Cattle (head) | Beef Cattle (head) | Dairy Cattle (head) |
| 1939 | 7,400 | 500 | 6,900 |
| 1940 | 7,500 | 500 | 7,000 |
| 1941 | 7,900 | 400 | 7,500 |
| 1942 | 7,900 | 400 | 7,500 |
| 1943 | 8,800 | 500 | 8,300 |
| 1944 | 8,800 | 300 | 8,500 |
| 1945 | 8,300 | 400 | 7,900 |
| 1946 | 7,800 | 400 | 7,400 |
| 1947 | 7,400 | 400 | 7,000 |
| 1948 | 7,000 | 600 | 6,400 |
| 1949 | 7,800 | 700 | 7,100 |
| 1950 | 7,700 | 800 | 6,900 |
| 1951 | 7,600 | 1,100 | 6,500 |
| 1952 | 7,800 | 1,500 | 6,300 |
| 1953 | 8,000 | 1,200 | 6,800 |
| 1954 | 8,900 | 2,100 | 6,800 |
| 1955 | 9,600 | 2,500 | 7,100 |
| 1956 | 10,000 | 2,800 | 7,200 |

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Estimates Division
State of Washington

Poultry Farming: Chickens, Eggs, Turkeys, Ducks

Poultry farming is a minor activity in Wahkiakum County. Only about 10 farm places are considered in the last census (1954) to be poultry farms. As a sideline, however, about 50 to 75 general and miscellaneous farms have chickens and sell eggs. All poultry products sold off farms in the censuses in 1950 and 1954 ranged from \$23,000 to \$30,000. Production is primarily for home use and local markets. With the exception of eggs, very little of the poultry output goes to up-river markets of Portland or to resort areas on the Columbia River and the Pacific County beaches.

Table 17.- Chickens, Egg Production and Turkeys
Wahkiakum County, 1939-1954.

| Year | Chickens (birds) | Egg Production (dozens) | Turkeys Raised (birds) |
|------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1939 | 12,045 | 109,628 | 178 |
| 1944 | 11,827 | 107,384 | 81 |
| 1949 | 7,199 | 45,529 1/ | 10 |
| 1954 | 6,969 | 37,630 1/ | 380 |

1/ Includes eggs sold only, not entire production.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture,

Commercial egg production is the most valuable part of the poultry industry. About 40,000 to 45,000 dozen are sold per year. Money received by poultry farmers for fresh eggs has ranged from \$18,000 to \$23,000 per year. In 1954 there were 50 farms selling eggs. This was a decrease over the 1949 figure of 70 producers. Major factors causing some decline in egg production for market in recent years has been the cost of imported poultry feeds, depressed prices and large supplies produced in neighboring poultry counties such as Lewis, Cowlitz and Clark.

The raising of turkeys and ducks is on a small scale mainly for local marketing. Turkeys have become more common in recent years being raised on a half dozen farms. The number raised in 1954 was the highest since 1949. Raising ducks and geese is limited to a few farms for home-use or neighborhood sales.

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold
in 1954 - \$23,250

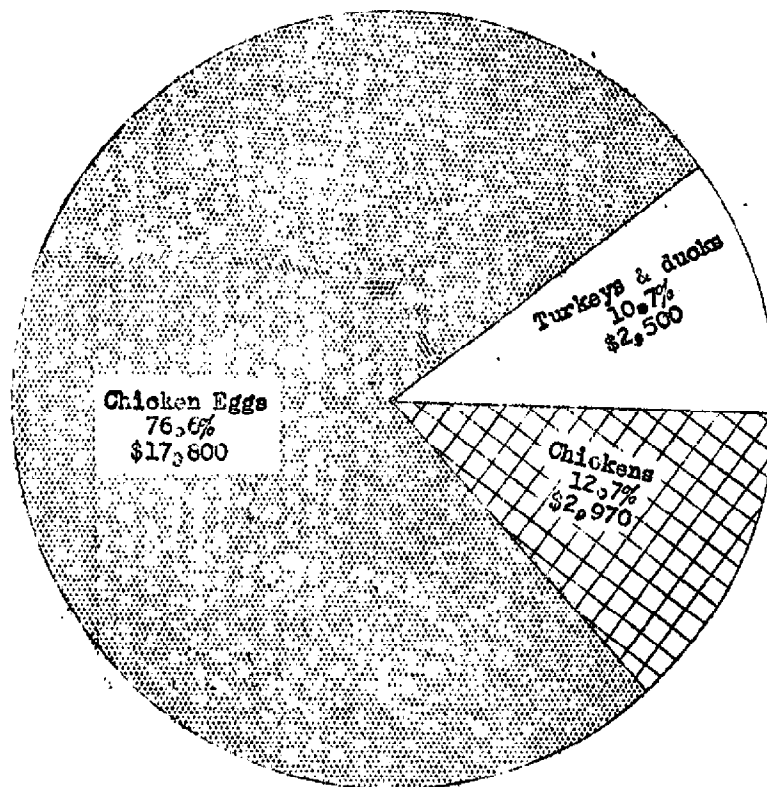


Figure 13.- Divisions of Wahkiakum County Poultry Industry
By Products Sold off Farms in 1954.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture.)

Hogs

Hog raising has declined greatly in Wahkiakum County since 1940. Swine numbers on farms went down from over 400 head to less than 60 during the last 15 years. By 1954 only 26 farms were keeping hogs and pigs and the average was less than 3 head to the farm. The sale of hogs is mainly to local custom slaughterers and is limited to about 30 to 50 head per year. Some butchering

is done for farm home use. A major reason for decline of hog raising has been the sharply decreased supply of skimmed milk from farm milk separators. Today, dairymen do little milk separating and ship whole milk almost entirely. As a result, they have abandoned hog feeding as a sideline. High cost of buying imported feed grains to fatten hogs makes pork production less unprofitable in this area.

Sheep

Sheep numbers have never been large in Wahkiakum County. In 1954, however, the census found the largest number of sheep on farms since 1935. About a dozen farms had small flocks of sheep in 1954, being 50 percent more farms than were carrying sheep in 1949. As a sideline to general livestock raising and dairying, a half dozen farms sold about 115 head of sheep and lambs in 1954. Damp winter climate and lack of grassland pastures in the heavily wooded uplands in addition to numerous predatory animals in the forests, tend to discourage sheep raising on a large scale in this coast range region.

Table 18.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules
Wahkiakum County, 1940-1954.

| Census Year | Hogs (head) | Sheep (head) | Horses and Mules (head) |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1940 | 410 | 111 | 282 |
| 1945 | 127 | 60 | 191 |
| 1950 | 79 | 24 | 88 |
| 1954 | 57 | 157 | 59 |

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Horses and Mules

Horses and mules for farm work, transportation, logging and local construction work have decreased in the last 30 years. They have been replaced by tractors, trucks and other machines. In earlier years a larger amount of pasture, hay and grain cropland was needed to support horses. There were 472 horses and mules in the Wahkiakum area in 1920, but the 1954 census found only 59 head. Less than 35 farms are presently keeping horses and they are mainly of the work type. About 30 places are using horses for farm work and some logging at the present time.

Bees and Honey

Only a few farm places keep bees for home use and local markets. Bee-keeping was quite common in earlier years of settlement when homesteaders and isolated places used local honey almost entirely. Most honey products consumed locally today are store-bought commercial brands packed in other parts of the state. In 1920 census enumerators recorded 420 hives. By 1954, however, there were only 11 hives, indicating that beekeeping had practically been abandoned as a farm sideline.